

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-84 (canceled)

Claim 85 (previously presented): A method of producing and selecting a transgenic plant exhibiting greater salt or osmotic stress tolerance than a control plant, the method steps comprising:

(a) introducing into a plant a recombinant polynucleotide that encodes a polypeptide that has an amino acid sequence that is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4;

wherein expression of the polypeptide in the transgenic plant confers the greater salt or osmotic stress tolerance relative to the control plant;

wherein the control plant has not been transformed with the recombinant polynucleotide; and

(b) selecting one or more transgenic plants exhibiting greater salt or osmotic stress tolerance relative to the control plant.

Claim 86 (previously presented): The method of claim 85, wherein the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence that is at least 98% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 87 (previously presented): The method of claim 85, wherein said polypeptide comprises SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 88 (previously presented): The method of claim 85, wherein the transgenic plant is a seedling or more mature plant.

Claim 89 (previously presented): The method of claim 85, wherein the transgenic plant produces a transformed seed that comprises the recombinant polynucleotide.

Claim 90 (previously presented): The method of claim 85, wherein the recombinant polynucleotide comprises SEQ ID NO: 3.

Claim 91 (previously presented): The method of Claim 85, wherein expression of the polypeptide is regulated by a constitutive, inducible, or tissue-specific promoter.

Claim 92 (previously presented): The method of Claim 85, wherein the transgenic plant has greater cotyledon expansion than the control plant after growing the transgenic plant and the control plant for three days in the presence of 150 mM NaCl.

Claim 93 (previously presented): A method of producing and selecting a transgenic seedling or more mature plant exhibiting greater salt tolerance than a control plant, the method steps comprising:

(a) introducing into a plant a recombinant polynucleotide that encodes a polypeptide that has an amino acid sequence that is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4;

wherein expression of the polypeptide in the plant confers the greater salt tolerance relative to the control plant;

wherein the control plant has not been transformed with the recombinant polynucleotide;

(b) growing the plant into the transgenic seedling or more mature plant; and

(c) selecting one or more transgenic seedlings or more mature plants exhibiting greater salt tolerance relative to the control plant.

Claim 94 (previously presented): The method of claim 93, wherein the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence that is at least 98% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 95 (previously presented): The method of claim 93, wherein said polypeptide comprises SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 96 (previously presented): The method of claim 93, wherein the recombinant polynucleotide comprises SEQ ID NO: 3.

Claim 97 (previously presented): The method of Claim 93, wherein expression of the polypeptide is regulated by a constitutive, inducible, or tissue-specific promoter.

Claim 98 (previously presented): The method of Claim 93, wherein the transgenic seedling or more mature plant is a transgenic seedling that has greater cotyledon expansion than the control plant after growing the transgenic seedling or more mature plant and the control plant for three days in the presence of 150 mM NaCl.